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IAC-D-101/3
14 March 1956

March 2, 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, Intelligence Advisory Committee

SUBJECT : Recommendations for Improving Collection
of Intelligence on Americans Held in
Communist Countries

Nature of the Problem

1. The United States Government and the American people traditionally have felt deep concern at the unjust detention of American citizens in foreign countries. The Government is obligated to take every possible step to procure the release of such citizens. The imprisonment of Americans in Communist countries presents a new and unusual problem in this field because of the exceptional difficulty of obtaining accurate intelligence.

2. In negotiating for release of prisoners held or believed held by Communist countries, it has become increasingly apparent that improved intelligence is an essential base for effective action to recover personnel. The Communists have demonstrated again and again that unless the United States can identify the subject of negotiation and provide evidence that he is being held by the Communists, there is little chance of effecting his release.

3. The intelligence available to support these recovery activities has usually been collected as a by-product of other intelligence. The material provided the negotiators has been compiled by persons outside the intelligence community who have little appreciation of the task of negotiating face to face with the Communists.

4. Most intelligence reports have been lacking in detail and specificity. General lack of emphasis on this problem has resulted in reporting of isolated bits of information which have not been correlated with existing intelligence. The reports reflect the shortage of background information in the hands of the field collectors.

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5. While there are indications of failure to cross-disseminate the reports available to all interested agencies, these problems of communication are rapidly being eliminated by improved liaison within the Government and by concentrated effort on the part of State and Defense Department personnel. However, there are certain areas that could benefit by further examination.

Examples of Particular Problems

6. In the negotiations being conducted in Geneva with the Chinese Communists by Ambassador Johnson, he has been severely handicapped in demanding an accounting for 450 American servicemen missing from the Korean war because the records on these men are inadequate. He has been unable to cite specific, convincing facts in individual cases to demonstrate that the Communists should have knowledge of the fate of these persons. One important reason for the inadequacy of the information is the fact that neither the original collectors of the intelligence nor the persons who compiled the records for use in Geneva were properly instructed as to the type of intelligence to be collected and the use to which it was to be put.

7. Many agencies are currently engaged in interrogating German prisoners returning from Soviet prison camps. The interrogators are handicapped in exploiting this excellent source of intelligence on Americans held in the USSR because they lack proper guidance and background material on missing persons.

Recommendations

8. It is recommended that arrangements be made in the intelligence community:

(a) to determine which agencies of the United States Government, both within and outside of the intelligence community, are capable of contributing substantially to the collection of intelligence of Americans believed held in Communist countries;

(b) to ensure that all available intelligence resources are utilized to locate and identify United States nationals held in Communist prisons and to collect and disseminate pertinent

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information to the Department of State in the cases of United States civilians, the Department of Defense in the cases of United States military personnel, or to both these departments when it is not known whether the individual is civilian or military;

(c) to provide for the establishment of an interviewing guide containing instructions for the collection of this type of intelligence, with a supplement containing photographs, vital statistics, and pertinent biographical material about personnel possibly held, and history of their disappearance or capture. This collection guide and supplement should be reproduced in legible and compact form and made available to all field collection agencies. The guide supplement should enable more pointed and accurate reporting from the field and facilitate feedback from time to time of intelligence available within the Washington area to field agencies. In addition the guide supplement would provide essential background material for use in negotiation;

(d) to ensure that effective procedures exist within the intelligence community for evaluating and collating information collected to insure the accomplishment of b) and c) above. (Without proper evaluation in the past, information pertaining to personnel not readily identified was not made available to the appropriate agencies.)

/s/ Ralph N. Clough
Deputy Director for [redacted]
Department of State Prisoner Officer

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/s/ James L. Monroe
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF,
Department of Defense Prisoner Officer